

1047

A  
S E R M O N  
Preached at  
BRIDGWATER,  
A T A N  
Ordination of Ministers,  
*August 2. 1698.*

---

By J. B.

---

*Published at the Request of some of the Hearers.*

---

L O N D O N,

Printed for J. Roberts, and are to be Sold by him  
at his Shop in *Bridgwater*; and by *John Sprint*  
in *Little-Britain*. 1699.



## J E R. XXIII. 21, 22.

*I have not sent these Prophets, yet they ran :  
I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my Counsel, and had caused my People to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil ways, and from the evil of their doings.*

**T**His Prophet *Jeremiah* lived in the declining time of the Kingdom of *Judah* ; in which (as he complains) Profaneness was gone forth into all the Land. For the reforming of which, he was raised up, but not prevailing here, in, he doth foretell the Captivity, which was now at hand. Hereby it appears what critical Circumstances the Prophet was in ; for it was hard to believe, that what he had foretold would come to pass, was not what he desir'd should come to pass. This put him upon that solemn appeal to God, *I have not desir'd the wofull day, O Lord thou know'st.* It did perhaps make the People suspect him to be a man disaffected to the Government, that he differ'd in a manner from all men as to the interest of the Nation as things then stood ; for he all along told them, that it was their only way to preserve themselves from utter Destruction, to submit to the *Babylonians* and *Chaldeans*, and not to depend upon the vain Succors of *Egypt*, this would prove a broken Reed, *Egypt* was then declining, and perhaps they had it still in thier remembrance, that *Josiah* by taking part with *Affria* against *Pharaoh* at *Megiddo*, did not only lose his life, but gave such a blow to the Kingdom



of Judah, that it did never after that time recover it self, 2 Kin. 23. 29. It seems, that the measures which wise Princes should take for their own safety must change with the Times. For that which at one time may preserve, upon the change of circumstances, may undo a Kingdom. Now this Counsel of the Prophet not to depend upon Egypt displeased the Court, but it did much more provoke them, that the Prophet did so plainly and particularly tell them of those Sins that provok'd God against the Nation. All men, but chiefly great men, above all others, Courtiers are impatient of Reproof, a Prophet of the Lord that doth not gently handle them, must needs fall under their Displeasure; for they that go in soft Raiment, and are in Kingshouses do expect to be complemented as well in the Pulpit as in the Street. It is no marvel if the Prophet in these hard circumstances was uneasie; for he had King and Court, City and Country, Priests, Prophets and People against him, as one that had deceived the People, as one disaffected to the Government; hence are his Complaints, chap. 15. 10. *Wo is me that my mother brought me forth as a man of Contentions, to the whole earth.* He had neither lent nor borrowed upon Usury, yet every one hated him, every one was against him. But that which above any thing gave him trouble, was the false Prophets, that told Prince and People the contrary to what Jeremiah had prophesied. These were they that cried Peace, that endeavoured to persuade the people that no evil was coming, v. 16, 17. *Hearken not to the words of the Prophets that prophesie unto you; they make you vain, they speak a Vision of their own hearts, and not out of the mouth of the Lord.* And what was it that these Prophets would have the People believe? why, that no evil was coming upon them, there was no need of a Reformation, all would end well, and in this they



at Bridgwater, Aug. 2. 1698. 3

they express great confidence, and pretended Inspiration, v. 18. *Who hath stood in the Counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? i. e. who besides our selves, who better than we are acquainted with the secret purposes of God to this Nation? And therefore believe not Jeremiab, he is a person disaffected to the Government, and speaks his own discontent, and not what shall come to pass: Egypt will relieve us, and save us out of the hands of the Chaldeans and Babylonians; we shall have Peace, there will be no Captivity.* Now these Prophets did not only deceive the people, but they did also strengthen the hands of evil Doers. So that none did return from his Wickedness, *Profaneness was gone forth into the whole land.*

Now concerning these Prophets, Jeremiab in these words doth observe two things, viz.

1. How they made themselves Prophets, but God had not sent them.

2. How they had abused the people and deceived them, speaking as from God what God had not reveal'd unto them. *I have not sent these Prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. They thrust themselves into the Ministry, and ran without their errand.* And 'tis for this that they are severely rebuk'd.

So that from the words I may observe how necessary it is for those that come in God's Name, that they be sent of God, for to go before we are sent, to prophesie before God speak to us, is to do what these false Prophets did, who fail'd in these two things, viz.

1. In entring into their Office, being not call'd to it.

2. In the execution of their Office, for they prophesied to the people, but it was not what God had spoken to them; for they told the people there was no evil coming upon them, no Captivity at hand, all would end well; Egypt with its Succors would

## 6 *An Ordination-Sermon preached*

be able to preserve them from the growing greatness of the *Babylonians* and *Caldeans*.

I confess, that I find my self under one disadvantage which I did not consider, when I first applied my self to speak to these words, *viz.* that in speaking to them I must apply what is spoken of Prophets extraordinary, and immediately called and sent to that which is ordinary, for so is the calling of a Minister, for I will not meddle with those that pretend to be immediately called and sent of God. However, allowing for what is extraordinary, and the words may be fitly enough applied to a Gospel-Minister. We must be sent, as well as those Prophets that were immediately sent; tho' I confess, 'tis not in all respects as they were sent. *Rom. 10. 15. How shall they preach, except they be sent?* Who can in the name of God declare the word of Reconciliation as the Messenger of God, that is not authorised and qualified so to do? and yet it is not the meaning of the Apostle that every Minister must be sent as he himself was, *1 Cor. 11. 23. I have received of the Lord, that which I have also delivered unto you.* We do not pretend that we have received either our Commission or our Errand immediately from Christ, as the Apostle did, and yet a Minister that preacheth the same Doctrine, may without presumption speak the same words. Something the Minister receives, which he is not to deliver: the Officer may, and in some cases ought to shew his Warrant that gives him Authority, but not to part with it. However as a Minister is to take heed, that he don't deliver what he hath not received; so also he must not pretend to come in God's name, except God hath sent him. He that is not sent, hath no Authority to make use of that man's Name that did not send him.

This I confess, may be a suitable Subject upon this occasion, to shew how necessary 'tis for Ministers to be

at Bridgwater, Aug. 2. 1698. 7

be sent of God, in order to our Acceptance with God, and Success among the people, that the want thereof may not lie at our own doors. As it was with these false Prophets, *If they had stood in my Counsel, and caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turn'd them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.*

But because it is agreed upon on both hands, that they that preach the Gospel must be sent; and the difference is chiefly in this, how they must be sent, who are they that under God must invest them in the Ministry; I say, for this reason I shall wave the usual method of a Sermon, and spend the remainder of our time in speaking to this Question, *viz.*

How may it be known to the satisfaction of our selves, and the people that attend our Ministry, whether we are sent of God? I mean, as far as 'tis necessary for those that pretend not to be immediately called and sent of God. We all love glad Tydings, and are apt to wellcome the Messenger that brings them, and indeed it is but fit it should be so. *Isa. 52. 7. How beautifull are the feet of them that bring glad tydings?* And yet 'tis not fit that every one that knows (as *Abimaz*) something of the matter, should go without sending. Our Brethren that satisfie themselves in their Conformity are not content that the publick Maintenance is engrossed to themselves, but they would engross the Ministry, many of them; and don't only condemn us for the exercise of our Ministry as Schismatical, but they would have it believ'd among the people, that our Ministry is a Nullity, that we are not sent of God. Now to relieve our selves against this Censure, and to give what satisfaction I can; I shall make it my business at this time to answer this Question, *viz.* How shall it appear that we are sent of God? *No man taketh (ought to take) this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, Heb. 5. 4.* A 4 Now



Now in answer to this Question, I shall lay down these three things, *viz.*

*First*, He that is duely sent of God doth sincerely design, and chiefly desire the Glory of God, and the good of Souls, by turning men from Darkness to Light, and from the power of Satan to God. The design of the Ministry is to better Mankind; and for this end St. Paul was sent.

*Secondly*, A Minister sent of God is comperently qualified for that Service, with the Gifts of Knowledge and Utterance, both which are essentially necessary to the Ministry.

*Thirdly*, To make him a Minister, he must be approv'd, devoted, consecrated and ordained by such as have received power to invest men in the Ministry. He that hath these Qualifications, *viz.* a sincere desire to serve God in the Ministry, is qualified for it, not only in his own conceit, but in the Judgment of those to whom it belongs to ordain, and is by them set apart for the work; the People ought to own him as a Minister, as one whom God hath sent.

*First*, We can never justify our selves before God, no, nor to our own Consciences, except there be a sincere desire to do good to mens Souls, except we can say with the Apostle, *I seek not yours but you, your good more than your reward.* For to design the Ministry as a Calling to live by, and to look no higher, is so low and mean, that he that looks no higher is unworthy of the Name. True it is, that he that preacheth the Gospel must live by the Gospel, as they that serve at the Altar had their maintenance from the Altar, 1 Cor. 9. 12, 14. For if it be a Calling, and if Ministers ought as much as they are able to give themselves to the work of their Ministry, as their Calling, and that wholly, as the Apostle commandeth Timothy to do, 1 Tim. 4. 14, 15. *Give Attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, neglect not the gift that*

at Bridgwater, Aug. 2. 1698. 9

is in thee, which was given thee by Propheſie, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. Meditate upon theſe things, give thy ſelf wholly to them. I ſay, if it be a Calling, 'tis almoſt as eaſie to prove that a maintenance is due to them, as 'tis to prove that they muſt eat and drink: and the people are to conſider this more than (I fear) they do. The want hereof muſt in time quite extinguiſh, or at leaſt cauſe the Miniſtry to dwindle away into Contempt. And the Lamp muſt needs go out, when 'tis not maintain'd with Oil, though not ſo ſoon as when 'tis blown out. People therefore ſhould take heed that they do not that by detaining a maintenance, which their Enemies would do by force and violence. And yet to deſign the Miniſtry as a Calling to live by, and to have no higher ends is baſe and mercenary.

The firſt Queſtion in the Office of Ordination is this, viz. Do you truſt that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghoſt to take upon you this Office and Miniſtry to ſerve God, for the promoting of his Glory, and for the edifying his People? And the answer that every one muſt make: that will be ordain'd is this, viz. I truſt I am. Surely the thing is to be conſider'd by all Miniſters, by us that are Miniſters, that if our deſign was not entirely the Glory of God and the good of Souls, to be aſham'd of it, and humbled for it that we came under that Curſe that was threatned againſt the houſe of Eli, 1 Sam. 2. 36. Put me into one of the Priests Offices that I may eat bread. And thoſe that at this time are entering upon the Miniſtry ſhould ſeriously conſider that Queſtion, whether they can with a good Conſcience make that answer, and not lie in the Preſence of God, and the Congregation in ſo ſolemn a manner, and upon ſo ſolemn an occaſion. And yet 'tis too evident that many Miniſters never had that inward motion nay perhaps did never conſider what it is.

is. If it were well weigh'd, that heat that they have to be made Ministers would soon abate in them, that have nothing more in their Eye, but some Benefice, to which they cannot have Presentation and Induction, but by Orders. And so they enter into the Ministry as men do into secular Employments and Callings to get a livelihood. Now if men do make their first step into the Ministry by a Lie, such an open solemn Lie as this, that they are mov'd by the Holy Ghost to take upon them this Ministry; to serve God in the edifying his people, and yet as to this inward motion they know nothing of it but this, that they know they never had it. It is no great wonder if such Ministers having gotten into the Ministry as into a Calling to maintain and enrich themselves, doe endeavour to make the best of their Calling, by grasping into their hands as many places as by Favour or Simony they can get, and then substitute some poor illiterate Curate, a thing so openly scandalous, that the Council of *Trent* would have reform'd it in the Church of *Rome*; nay it is reform'd in some Churches belonging to that Communion, but not in the Church of *England*, notwithstanding the great outcries we have made about our Separation from them. I say the Council of *Trent* would have reform'd it, had it been over-rul'd by the Court of *Rome*. The present King by his Injunctions to the Bishops doth enough shew his dislike of this matter, if they to whom it belongs to prevent it will do their part.

*Secondly*, A Minister that is sent of God must be qualified with those Gifts of Knowledge and Utterance, as are highly necessary to the Ministry. Tho' 'tis hard to determine what degrees of Gifts are necessary, yet 'tis easie to see that degrees of Knowledge are necessary to him that is to teach and instruct men above what is necessary to others. The  
Master



at Bridgwater, Aug. 2. 1698. 11

Master should know more than the Scholar, the Guide should know the way better than the Traveller that takes him for his Guide. Tho' the Church of *Rome* would keep the people in ignorance, they are for a learned Clergy. God doth make so great use of the gifts of Ministers, that 'tis strange that any that pretend to Learning should make light of the Qualifications of Ministers, under a pretence that the Office suffereth, and that people should not much concern themselves about the gifts of their Ministers, God (they say) having instituted the Office will bless it, and is not tied to the gifts of Ministers. True it is that God is not tied to means and instruments; he can do his own work without means, and by weak instruments. But yet this is no rule to us, for we are not to consider what God can do, nor what he hath done when means have fail'd, when upon the Nations coming out of Popery able Ministers were not to be had; I don't doubt but that good was done by such as could be had. Some could do no more than read. But we are to consider what is the most likely way, in which we may expect the Concurrence of God's Grace and Blessing in the use of means. Whether it is not more likely that God may bless a laborious, faithfull, holy Ministry, than an ignorant, idle, wicked one. Except in extraordinary Cases, God doth use means adapted for the work he employs them about, and surely a Minister that takes no care of his own Soul, is not like to save other mens. *Moses* was rais'd up of God to bring the Children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*. *Moses* was in every thing fitted for that work except in a readiness of Speech, which was supply'd by *Aaron*, who was to be his Spokesman. *Moses* was bred up at Court, and train'd up in the Learning of the *Egyptians*; a man that understood the rules of Policy, and the meekest man upon earth.

One

12 *An Ordination-Sermon preached*

One that was for forty years an Herdsman, and had travers'd that Wilderness through which he was to lead the Children of Israel. Whatever St. Paul was before his Conversion, God that put him into the Ministry made him an able Minister; and tho' our Saviour chose for his Disciples unlearned Fishermen, yet St. Paul chargeth Timothy to look well to the Gifts and Abilities of such as he should take into the Ministry, *2 Tim. 2. 2. The same commit thou to faithfull men, who shall be able to teach others, and to lay hands suddenly on no man.* *1 Tim. 5. 22.* Is it not evident, that 'tis not the Office but the Gifts of Ministers and their diligence and industry that must convert and edifie the people? What is the Ministry, but an Office ordain'd for instructing the people? And what is the Office but an obligation to do the work of the Office? and is the work done by an obligation upon men to do it? Doth the Office of a Constable, or the Mayor of the Town prevent and punish Debauchery and Profaneness, or the care and diligence of him than in the Office? Is a sick man heal'd by the Office, or rather is he not heal'd by the skill of the Physician? Why should the Kingdom be at that charge to give a liberal Maintenance to the Ministry, if there be little odds as to the Gifts and Abilities of Ministers? Gifts therefore of knowledge and utterance are highly necessary to him that would prove himself to be sent of God. *The Priest's lips should preserve knowledge, and they (the people) should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts, Mal. 2.* And the qualifications of a Minister should consist in these two things, viz.

*First*, Ministers should be able to speak from the people to God, to open the case of the people, their wants and desires, and his own wants and desires in Prayer. Ministers should be able to do this in  
orderly,

at Bridgwater, Aug. 2. 1698. 13

orderly, clear, and congruous Expressions, according to the several occasions that will happen, which a stinted form can never comprehend. And that a stinted form cannot comprehend the several occasions for which Prayers and Praises ought to be offer'd up to God appears from hence, that as oft as days of Humiliation and Thanksgiving are commanded to be observed, Prayers are composed and sent down to be used for that occasion; which is an open acknowledgment that there is a Defect in our Liturgy, and that 'tis necessary to supply that Defect. But what provision is there made for the particular occasions of each Congregation, and for the several Members of the Congregation? If new Prayers are necessary for days of Humiliation and Thanksgiving, why not for such particular occasions of the Congregation? The Minister had need to be able to do this, for a stinted Form cannot comprehend the various Accidents of Life, for which Prayers and Praises are to be made. There will be inconveniences that may attend conceiv'd Prayer; and are there none on the other hand, that will attend composed Forms? Every thing that is the work of man, will savour of the Imperfection of man. However, we are (as I think) on the surest side, for the Scripture commands us to pray; but what place of Scripture commands that Prayer must be always as oft as the Church comes together in the same words? If a stinted Form were so necessary as is pretended, I don't think it would have been left undetermined in the Scripture; neither would the Apostles have left the several Churches that they planted, unprovided of a Form of Prayer, if a Form had been necessary. This Argument which some have well improv'd, carries that weight with it, that they that are for the imposing of Forms, do yet acknowledge that such Forms of Prayer from which it was not lawfull for the Minister to vary, were not imposed for the first three Centuries; and consequently that they came not into the Christian



stian Church till about four or five hundred years after Christ. Now to take off this prejudice, they tell us that then there was no need of them, Ministers were supplied with extraordinary Gifts, Gifts of Tongues, Gifts of Miracles, Gifts of Prophecie. I confess, 'tis very evident that such extraordinary Gifts were then bestowed; but that every one that was ordain'd to the Ministry, had thereupon a constant extraordinary Gift either for Prayer or Preaching, is sooner said than prov'd. Nay rather the contrary to this is evident, that tho' the first general Preachers of the Gospel that were not limited to this or that Church, but were to spread the Gospel in all Places and Nations; tho' I say these (no doubt) had such an extraordinary Gift, it doth not appear that all others had it. The directions that St. Paul gives to *Timothy* and *Titus* about the Qualifications of Ministers do plainly intimate the contrary. So that stinted Forms of Prayer coming into the Church not till four or five hundred years after Christ; whether the imposing of Forms of Prayer be to be justified from hence, because about 500 years after Christ, they were impos'd; I say, whether this be a good argument must be determined from the state of the Church at that time. As to this all that I shall say is to repeat the words of one that hath ransacked all the Corners, penetrated the inwards, and dived to the bottom of Antiquity, viz. Mr. *Clerkson*, p. 181. speaking of the Introduction of Liturgies. They were not entertained, till nothing was admitted into the Church, *de novo*, but corruptions, or the Issues of them; no change made in the ancient Usages, but for the worse, no Notions from its Primitive State, but downwards into degeneracy, till such orders took place as respected, not what was most agreeable to the rule and primitive Usage, or what was best to uphold the life and power of Religion in its solemn Exercises, or what might secure it from that dead Heartiness and Formality.

at Bridgwater, Aug. 2. 1698. 15

mality, into which Christianity was sinking. In a word, not till the Church was rather to be pitied than imitated. Thus far Mr. Clerkson.

I confess, however, 'tis a cunning Device, for by this means, *viz.* the casting out of all Prayer but what is read out of a Book, there will be no discernable difference of Ministers Gifts; but they will hardly be able to prevent the people from saying, this way of Prayer is no more than we our selves can do, why should we maintain and honour men for doing no more than a Boy of ten or twelve years old can do? nay there will be a greater inconvenience than this; Let Ministers be provided for with Forms of Prayer made to their hands, without putting forth themselves to exercise the Gift of Prayer, and in time they will be unable to pray otherwise.

*Secondly,* A Minister should be able to speak from God to the people; to declare the whole Will and Counsel of God to them. The Work and Design of the Ministry is to better Mankind, to turn men from their evil ways, and from the evil of their doings; surely such a work doth require Gifts of Knowledge and Utterance. Conversion doth restore man to the image of God, which consists in Knowledge, Righteousness, and Holiness, and the means must be fitted to the end. Ministers should be able not only to make Sermons, set studied Discourses, but upon all occasions to speak a word in season. I am sure this is that which Ministers promise to do, *viz.* to use both publick and private Monitions and Exhortations as well to the sick as to the whole: *Spansf. 3. Office of Ordination.*

*Thirdly,* Together with these, there ought to be the approbation of those to whom it belongs to judge of the Qualifications of those that would devote themselves and their Labours to God in the Service of the Ministry, when these have approv'd them as persons duly qualified, and commended them to God, and have

have by Prayer and Imposition of hands invested them in the Ministry, these are to be owned by the people as Ministers sent of God.

I know that some engross this power of making Ministers to such as are now called Diocesan Bishops, whom they make so necessary to Ordination of Ministers, that whoever is ordain'd without them by Ministers of particular Congregations, some of our Brethren are pleas'd to say, these Ordinations having not the concurrence of a Diocesan Bishop, are a mere nullity. And the Parliament that made the Law, that required Reordination of all such as had been thus ordain'd, were no doubt of this opinion. Some indeed have said their Ordination was required to the exercise of their Ministry, and not the Office. A License would have done that without Ordination. Moreover there was no difference made betwixt those that had been ordain'd before, and those that pretended not to it; which proves that our Law-makers, of whom the Bishops were a part, look'd upon all those Ordinations as a Nullity, for no less was required of us that had been ordain'd than of those that had not been ordain'd. And yet they would not declare that all our Ministrations were a nullity. So inconsistent are all they with themselves that design the interest of a Party, more than of the truth. This puts me in mind of what a reverend Minister then told one of the Bishops; *viz.* I am afraid (said he) there is that Severity shewn in the Act of Conformity, that 'tis to be feared very many Ministers will not conform: To whom the Bishop replied, I am afraid there will be too many. Surely (to speak modestly) that Prelate was not of the opinion of the Apostle Paul, who rejoiced that Christ was preached, tho' some that preached him were no great friends to the Apostle. But in confirmation of what I have to say, I would not make Reflections upon what is past any further than our own Vindication will make it necessary.

*First,*



at Bridgwater, Aug. 2. 1698. 17

*First*, Therefore to prove this, let it be supposed that a Minister of a particular Congregation (whom for distinction-sake we call a Presbyter) be of an inferior order to a Bishop. It is upon this pretence that the power of Ordination is denied to them. Now if these Ministers (Presbyters) being but the Ministers of particular Congregations may make a Bishop, they may certainly make and ordain Ministers; for if they can do the greater, they may do the less. This was the answer of Archbishop *Usher* to King *Charles* the First, who told that King, that in the Church of *Alexandria* the Presbyters always made their own Bishop. And the thing is so necessary, that Episcopacy can't well be preserv'd, except the inferiour Clergy have a power to make their own Bishops. Suppose as sometimes it hath fallen out here in this Kingdom, that there were not Bishops enough to consecrate Bishops, who can make them but the inferiour Clergy? It fell out so in *England* at the coming of Queen *Elizabeth* to the Crown. Cardinal *Poole* then Archbishop of *Canterbury* died within four and twenty hours of Queen *Mary*, and upon his death the See of *Canterbury* being void, Dr. *Parker* was preferr'd to it, there were not (as Dr. *Burnet* now Bishop of *Salisbury* observes) Bishops enough of the Protestant Religion to ordain him, and the Popish Bishops would not: so he was made Bishop by *Barlow*, *Story*, *Coverdale* and *Hodgkins*, three of these were only Titular, and had no Sees, and the other a Suffragan. So that the first Bishop that was made here upon the coming of Queen *Elizabeth* to the Crown, was made by Presbyters, and not by Diocesan Bishops. This put Mr. *Mason* upon the writing of his Book in Vindication of the *English* Ministry against the Papists, who triumph'd much upon this occasion. Surely therefore, if Ministers may make Bishops, who pretend to be a superior order to them, what should hinder that they should not have a power to ordain Ministers? Just

such another absurdity the Papists run themselves into; for they also appropriate the power of Ordination to Diocesan Bishops, and yet according to the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, every Priest by a few words speaking can make a God, and turn the Elements of Bread and Wine into the natural Body of our Saviour, but they must not presume to make Ministers.

*Secondly*, The nature of Ordination proves our Ministry to be no Nullity. Ordination is but a determining of the persons to be ordained, as persons duly qualified for the Office, whereupon they are by Prayer and Imposition of hands invested in the Ministry. Now what is there in this, that Ministers may not do without a Diocesan? We do not give them their power and ministerial Authority, that is from God, and what that power is that God gives them, 'tis not we, but the word of God that must determine. The power and authority Ecclesiastical or Ministerial is from God as the civil power. Now 'tis not usual for Kings to be invested by Kings, 'tis always done by their Subjects. True it is in the Office of Ordination as appointed in the Church of *England*, the Bishop is directed to say, Take thou Authority to preach the word of God, and to minister the holy Sacraments. But 'tis not the Bishop that is the Donor of that Authority, and that 'tis not so, will appear to him that doth but consider this one thing, they that ordain men to the Office, don't make the Office. He only gives the power that made the Office to which the power belongs. As the King that can make Corporations and Mayors, doth give them what power they have. Our Brethren that would nullifie our Ministry, are pleas'd to tell us, that Bishops in ordaining Ministers do give them what power they have, and that Ministers can have no more power than the Bishops intended to give them in Ordination; and that therefore Presbyters can have no power to ordain, because the Bishops in ordaining them

at Bridgwater, Aug. 2. 1698. 19

them, intended it not to them. True it is that about two hundred years ago all our Ordinations came from those that were of the Episcopal Perswasion and Communion; and who can pretend that they that then ordain'd did intend to give this power? The argument were of weight, if the Bishops had made the Office, but it being not so, it matters not what their intentions were that then ordain'd Ministers. Were it not so, what I pray would become of the Reformation? Had our Reformers no more power than the Pope and his Bishops intended to give them? Surely they never intended them a power to reform. Ordination therefore being but a determining of the Persons, and an investing men in the Ministry, what power thereupon Ministers have, is from God: as when one of your Neighbours is made Mayor of your Town, he doth not receive his power from them that chose him, nor from him that swears him, but from the King, that gave the Charter.

*Thirdly*, I would argue from the necessary consequence of that opinion that would engross the power of Ordination to a Diocesan, and make all other Ordinations a meer Nullity. It followeth (and they own it) that their Ministry is no Ministry, their Sacraments no Sacraments, their Churches no Churches, and 'tis well if they allow them to be in a state of Salvation: and yet these very men acknowledge that they are true Ministers and Churches, that have *Roman* Ordination, proclaiming hereby an utter Renunciation of the reformed Churches, which have no such Ordinations, and yet a Coalition with the *Roman* Church and Clergy, whom they will allow (if any of them will come over to us) the exercise of their Ministry without Ordination, but not the Protestant Ministers that were driven out of *France*. That I do not wrong them, see Mr. *Dodwell's* Preface to the Unity of the Priesthood, p. 11. where he saith, That we are guilty of a-



betting a divine Authority in men, to whom God hath given no such Authority, that we are guilty of forging Covenants in God's name, and counterfeiting the great Seals of Heaven in Ratification of them. And what can be more treasonable by all the principles of Government? what is more provoking and more difficultly pardonable? These are his words; and they are indeed severe and frightfull; but as one saith, the Devil hurts those most he least affrighteth. Our Comfort is, that the old Church of *England* owned the foreign Protestant Churches as true Churches, and their Ministers as true Pastors. It is but a few (I hope) of the Innovators, that call themselves the Church of *England*; that say, they have no true Ministers that have not an uninterrupted Succession of Diocesan Ordination from the Apostles. It was these men, or men of these Principles that made the severe Acts, that required Re-ordination; and have been the great Agents of all the dividing, persecuting, silencing Laws, to which God Almighty, by bringing in of our Protestant King, hath put a stop. I shall mention one consequence more that they must necessarily own that go this way; if our Ministry without the concurrence of a Bishop in our Ordination be a Nullity, our Ministrations also in the giving the Sacraments must be a Nullity, a counterfeiting of the broad Seals of Heaven, to speak in the words of the before-mention'd Author, that we baptiz'd are not indeed baptiz'd. It follows hence that our Sovereign Lord the King had need to address himself to them for Baptism; for I am persuaded he that gave his Majesty Christian Baptism was not Episcopally ordain'd. And surely that Prince that would be supreme head of the Church, had need to be initiated by Baptism.

More might be said in confirmation of this, but I shall spend the remainder of our time in drawing some practical Inferences from the Discourse.

*APPLI-*

## APPLICATION.

*First* therefore, It appears from hence, that they that nullifie the Ministry of such persons, who have all that is necessary to prove their Mission, are no real Friends to the Reformation. Our first Reformers, though they differed from the Foreign Protestant Churches, acted from Catholick Principles, that comprehended the Foreign Ordinations, chusing rather to assert the Identity of Bishops and Presbyters, than to expose those Churches that had thrown out our *English* Prelacy. And though they pleaded for Episcopacy, they acknowledged that it was not necessary to the being, but only *ad bene esse* of the Church. And it was not till our Reformation went backward by an endeavour to bring in a Coalition with the Church of *Rome*, that Reordination was required of them that had been ordained before by Presbyters. *Peter Martyr* at *Oxford*, *Martin Bucer* at *Cambridge* had Ecclesiastical Preferments in the Church of *England*; *Cranmer* that invited them hither never required Re-ordination of them. *Whittingham* was made Dean of *Durham* though it was known, that in his Exile in *Queen Mary's* time, he had been ordain'd by Presbyters only. Mr. *Travers* ordain'd by a Presbytery beyond the Sea, was suffered quietly to hold the place of a Centurer at the *Temple*. Mr. *Camero* ordain'd in *France* had the like liberty, by the Permission of King *James* the First, when that King was about to set up Episcopacy in *Scotland*; it was argued whether the Bishops intended for *Scotland* should not be ordain'd first Ministers, because they had not received Ordination by a Bishop, and it was carried in the negative by the means of Bishop *Bancroft*. Thus this matter went till Archbishop *Laud* (whose great design it was to bring about a Reconciliation between the Church of *England* and the Church of *Rome*) made it his business to please the Romanists, and it could not but please them to see those that had the

management of our Church affairs here in *England*, declare a Nullity in our Ministry and Ministrations, they knew it would be a good step towards Popery. This design dying with him was reviv'd again upon the coming in of King *Charles II.* Surely those learned Men and Bishops that had been with that King in his Exile beyond the Seas, must be supposed to know that King's Religion, and what his designs were; these were they that among other hard things that they imposed upon us to the exercise of our Ministry, brought a necessity of Re-ordination.

*Secondly*, Seeing the sincere desire of doing good to Souls is so necessary to prove Ministers to be sent of God, I beg of you that are to be ordain'd this day to look to your Aims and Ends, that they be such, for Purity of intention is absolutely required to the acceptance of what we do; so that though we do what is commanded, but not because it is commanded; it is as if we had not done it, nay 'tis in some respect as if God had not commanded it. Remember the words of the Prophet concerning *Jehu*. He was commanded to destroy the house of *Abab*, and yet because he did what he was commanded, but not with that Purity of Intention as was necessary to his acceptance, not to destroy Idolatry as he pretended, but to establish himself in the Kingdom, therefore, saith God, *I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu*, Hof. 1. 3, 4. The more entirely we aim at this, the doing of good, the turning men from the evil of their ways and doings, the more contented we shall be in our present circumstances; in which, though we have not that encouragement as we could desire, yet we have more than the Primitive Preachers of the Gospel obtain'd for the space of three hundred years: we have more encouragement than we expected, or indeed could rationally expect, enough therefore to make us thankfully to acknowledge *it is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.*

*Thirdly,*



at Bridgwater, Aug. 2. 1698. 23

*Thirdly*, Seeing the Gifts of Knowledge and Utterance are so highly necessary to the Ministry, let us more endeavour to qualifie our selves with those Gifts that may evidence it to the People, that we are sent of God, and not trust to the Ceremony of Ordination, which when it is applied to men utterly destitute of those Gifts may be a mere Nullity. A Mute or an Idiot is no Minister though ordain'd. Our care therefore should be, ours that are in the Ministry, and yours that stand as Candidates for the Ministry, to keep and increase those Gifts that may enable us to the performance of all Ministerial Duties.

*First*, We are the mouth of the people to God. What! should a Minister look no further to accomplish himself for that part of his Ministry, but to read out of the Book what he hath to pray for in behalf of the people? God commandeth Christians to *pray with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit*, Eph. 6. 18. And is the Ministry exempted? should he not be able to do that which every private Christian is required to do? A Minister should not be confin'd to the Fetters of other mens narrow defective Words and Books, whatever may be said on behalf of such as need the help of a composed Form, I wonder that men should think it necessary that all should be confin'd to them. It can't be supposed that all do need them. Let us not be affrighted out of our duty by a pretence that the thing is not attainable, on a sudden to express our desires. Remember the words of the Apostle, *Rom. 8. 26. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our Infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.* The Apostle doth not say, the Book will tell you, for then there was none, for ought appears, but the Spirit helpeth our Infirmities. So that Spiritual Prayer was in the Church, before the Jesuits brought it in. This Gift of the Spirit all ought to pray for, Ministers especially, that they may not only desire graciously, and acceptably

## 24      *An Ordination-Sermon preached*

tably things necessary, but express these desires on behalf of the people, that they by joyning with us may make them their own desires. And we should endeavour to excell in this Gift, that we may avoid all those Indecencies, which those that idolize Forms are apt to take notice of and expose, *viz.* a foolish Loquacity, pouring out (as one saith) tumultuous indigested thoughts. *We are not rashly to utter any thing before the Lord, Eccles. 5. 2.* We should also avoid vain Repetitions, *for we shall not be heard for much speaking, Matth. 6 7.* We should also avoid affected Words and Phrases, for certainly the more plain and familiar our words are, the better they suit with the nature of Prayer. In a word, we should endeavour to observe the general rule of our Saviour, *not to be as the hypocrites.* Thus let us all endeavour to accomplish our selves for this part of our Ministry; and if our Brethren out of a fondness to their own way of Devotion will ridicule our Performances, and expose us to their people, let us patiently bear it, 'tis no new thing for men to pretend that there are Barbarisms and Solecisms in the Prayers of Ministers. This *St. Austin* takes notice of in his time. *Ita enim non irredébunt, se aliquos antestites & ministros ecclesiæ forte animadveniunt, vel cum barbarismis & solecismis deum invocare.* So they will not jeer, if perhaps they take notice, that some Bishops and Ministers of the Church do invoke God with Barbarisms and Solecisms: to such as feared this, he saith, God mindeth not so much the Expression, as the inward Affection. This passage by the way proves that such Prayers were then used, in which some might pretend there were Barbarisms. Surely they could not be Forms prescribed by the Church. However if we meet with the same usage, the same Language that *St. Austin* in his time observ'd, let us not wonder at it; it seems it is no new thing, and therefore we should the more patiently bear it, and watch our own Spirits,

that

at Bridgwater, Aug. 2. 1698. 25

that we do not expose and make their way of Devotion worse than it is, because they expose ours. For the Spirit of Prayer and true Devotion may be in those that confine themselves to a Form. And they that use no Forms may be as formal as other Men. There is (as one saith, and I think he saith well in it) a particular Gust as to Spiritual things, that may differ as much as men do as to Meat and Drink. In which one liketh and is nourished by that which another loatheth, and it may be would do him hurt, if it were impos'd upon him. I do believe that the true Spirit of Prayer may be in those that do not well relish our way, and they ought (and I doubt not but many of them do) think so of ours. Let every one have what he liketh, and let no man be drench'd with what he loatheth. It is but a few of that way, and they (I doubt) none of the most devout Persons, that will dare to impose upon any, but especially upon such frivolous pretences, Christians have more need to be rebuk'd for the neglect of Prayer in Secret and in their Families; than for praying without or with a Form. However it should quiet us to consider, that if the Controversie be (as for ought we know it is) who shall do best, it is the more pardonable, provided it be done on both sides, with that Reverence and Unweariedness as it ought to be done, but woe be to that Hypocrite that shall be found in the Omission of that great Duty, for which he was such a Stickler. *They eat up my people, as they eat Bread, and call not upon the Name of the Lord,* Psalm 14. 8. To conclude this particular, it doth seem to me, whatever is pretended to the contrary, that our first Reformers who composed the Liturgy, were far enough from the mind of those that plead for its Imposition; they compos'd those Forms to assist Ministers, that coming newly out of Popery must be suppos'd to need those helps, not with an intent to exclude and run down *extempore*, conceiv'd Prayer. There is one passage in the Office  
of



of Ordination, that makes me think so; it is immediately after the Sponsions, and in these words, *viz.* After this the Congregation shall be desir'd secretly in their Prayers to make their humble Supplications to God for all these things, for the which Prayers, there shall be silence kept for a space. By this passage it appears that the Compilers of our Liturgy, as being sensible of the defect of a Form of Words, thought it necessary to give the Congregation a space of time, that every person might abound in his own way of conceived Prayer.

*Secondly*, Being we are to speak from God to the people, in which respect a Minister is as God's Mouth to declare the whole counsel of God to them; we should endeavour to accomplish our selves for this work, that we may do this according to the direction that St. Paul gives Titus, chap. 2. v. 1, 8. *With soundness of Doctrine, and with Speech that cannot be blam'd.*

*First*, Let us endeavour to do it with Soundness of Doctrine, v. 1. *Speak thou the things which become sound Doctrine*: Now to do this there is need of skill, the Christian Religion is baited with many Controversies, and that in some material points. The Enemy hath sown his Tares, Books that strike at all reveal'd Religion are in all parts of the Nation; Ministers whose Calling it is to look into Books, should be able to discern, that they may do their part to prevent the spreading of those opinions, 1 Tim. 4. 16. *Take heed to thy self, and to thy Doctrine.*

*Secondly*, *Soundness of Speech that cannot be blam'd*, v. 8. That not only the matter we deliver be agreeable to the Analogy of Faith, but we should be able to express our Thoughts so as that the wording of our matter be not despis'd. The English Tongue is much refin'd of late years. I confess we should avoid on the one hand quaintness of Speech, that which the Apostle calls *the words of man's wisdom*, 1 Cor. 2. 4. In the use of this it is possible for those that affect a florid Stile,

Stile, to preach to the people to as little purpose almost, as if we preach'd in another Language; he no doubt is the best Preacher, that can make every thing that he preacheth to the people, easie to be understood. And yet we should take heed of falling into an extreme this way, and fill mens ears with an empty Sound of Words, nauseous Repetitions, and for want of Matter, say over and over the same thing, and deliver words without Matter.

Having gotten these Gifts, let us see to it, that we don't lose them. The way to have the continuance and increase of these, is to use them to the end for which they are given. The way to pray better is to pray more, the way to preach better is to preach more. Every one learneth by teaching, and gets at least a more orderly digested knowledge. Let every one do his best, and stir up the Gift that is in him, and by this means he will attain to do better, and his profiting will appear. God threatens the *Idol-shepherds*, that their arm should be dried, and their right eye darkned, Zech. 11. 17. This is a Judgment to be feared by all men, Ministers especially, even the darkning, withering Operations of God's Spirit.

In a word, we should endeavour in a particular manner to accomplish our selves for occasional Discourses, I confess 'tis more natural for some men, all have not a presence of Mind and Thought, nor a command of words to express their own thoughts, and yet 'tis that which Ministers especially should endeavour after, that upon all occasions we may be able to speak a word in season suited to the occasion.

I could not but take particular notice of what I lately met with in a Book written by a Jesuit, one of the Missionaries that the *French King* employed in that great Empire of *China*, to convert them to Christianity in those parts: He observes that he found more good done by those occasional Discourses, than by his studied

studied Performances; People were more affected and wrought upon by what was said to them in particular concerning a future State, the day of Judgment, than of what he had said with more strength of reason in the Congregation.

*Fourthly*, Let us then deliver and look after the success of that Message that God hath sent by us; a faithfull Messenger ought to deliver the whole Message.

*First*, let us deliver our Message with all faithfulness, and without Partiality, and respect of persons. Say to the wicked, it shall go ill with him; say to the righteous it shall go well with him. Have we a care of mincing the matter; *Matth. 28. 20. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I command you.* Our Saviour as sent of God kept within the bounds of his Commission, *John 12. 49. I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which hath sent me, he hath given Commandment, what I shall say, and what I should speak.* And therefore surely Ministers should take heed, that we may be able to say with our Saviour, *my Doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*

*Secondly*, And yet we should not only deliver, but look after the success of our Message, and to take care to do every thing, that may promote and not hinder the success of our Ministry, *Coloss. 1. 28. Warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.* And this we should endeavour,

*First*, By a Life suitable to our Calling. Sure'y our Relation to God, as sent by him, doth oblige us to take heed of our selves, that our Ministry be not blamed, for if we do not live well, not only we in our Persons, but our Ministry will be blam'd, *2 Cor. 6. 3.* 'Tis true it should not be so, why should the Ministry be blam'd for the faults of some men? And yet because men will do it, therefore we should take the more heed to our ways. The people should not have abhorr'd the  
Lord's



at Bridgwater, Aug. 2. 1698. 29

Lord's Offerings, because *Eli's* Sons were wicked lewd men, and yet it was an Aggravation of their Sin, that they gave the people that occasion. The Apostle saith to *Timothy*, *let no man despise thy youth*, 1 Tim. 4. 12. He doth not say it to the people, because generally when we are despis'd, the fault is in our selves; and the way to prevent, that the people may not despise such of us as are young, or upon any other account, is to do what the Apostle there exhorts *Timothy* to, *Be thou an example to believers, in word, in conversation, in spirit, in faith, in purity*. The greatest Gifts of Ministers will never do that good, as their bad example will do hurt. The people not only that are ignorant but such as fear God, will take bad Impressions, and many times will be led away by the example of Ministers, especially in things that are disputable, the Apostle observes that many were carried away by the Dissimulation of *Peter*; so that he was constrained to *reprove him openly before the Church*, Gal. 2. 14. In a word, we should be the more carefull to give in all things a good example, for they that scruple to hear us, will be quick-sighted to observe what is amiss in us.

*Secondly*, We should not only deliver but endeavour the success of our Message from God to the people by our incessant Prayers; for 'tis Prayer that renders our endeavours in the Ministry fruitfull and successfull. *Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but 'tis God that must give the increase*. Let a Minister be never so rational and convincing in his Discourses, all his labour will be fruitless without divine Grace succeeding it. A Key that is exactly fit to all the Wards of the Lock, cannot open it without an hand to turn it. Let the most proper and powerfull motives to work upon the heart be represented in the proper light, and evidence to the utmost advantage; they cannot open the heart, this is God's work, and this we should pray for. It is observable, that *Abraham's* Servant would not deliver the

### 30 *An Ordination-Sermon preached*

the Message for which he was sent, till he had first prayed to God to succeed it, *Gen. 21. 12.* And then just as he prayed so it fell out. Thus when *Nebemiab* was to make his Request to the King, he darted up a short Prayer to the God of Heaven, before he would speak to the King, *Neb. 2. 5, 6.* *For what dost thou make thy request? So I prayed to the God of Heaven, and said to the King, Let us do the like.* The Gospel is the power of God to Salvation, but still Prayer is requisite to obtain the holy Spirit, by whose influence the word proves effectual. What is more worthy of our constant Prayers than precious immortal Souls? I do remember what I read in the Life of that most eminent Man of God, *Mr. Walsh* a Minister of Scotland, who being to preach in the Afternoon, he tarried so long at his house, that the Congregation thought fit to send the Clerk to see what the matter was that *Mr. Walsh* staid beyond his usual time; the Clerk drawing near the room where he was, heard a very loud Voice, and standing still, he heard him with great importunity, oft repeating those words of *Moses* to God, *If thy presence go not with me, I will not go from hence*; as if he had determined not to preach till God should hear his Prayers for the success. Accordingly it fell out, he had never that success as at that time, and yet none had greater at other times.

*Lastly,* As for you the people that are assembled together upon this occasion, I have a word or two to speak, and I have done. If Ministers thus dispos'd and qualified, thus approv'd of and invested in the Ministry, are sent of God, your duty is to own them and receive them as such. Pray consider two things, *viz.*

*First,* Who it is that hath sent them. We Ministers are in all other respects as you are, but we are in God's stead, *2 Cor. 5. 19.* *We pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God.* God in this matter dealeth wisely in dealing familiarly with you, he doth not speak immediately to  
( you

at Bridgwater, Aug. 2. 1698. 31

you from Heaven, that the terrors of his Majesty may not make you afraid, but sendeth men, men of like Passions with our selves, who, if they deceive you, they must deceive their own Souls. Take heed therefore of despising the methods of the Almighty, that it is by the foolishness of Preaching, or that it is by men that the Message of the Almighty is brought unto you. In other matters the Messenger is received according to the respect we have to him that sent him. Our Saviour doth much insist upon this, that he came not in his own name, but in the name of him that sent him. And he tells his Disciples, *as the Father sent me into the world, so I send you*, abating only for what is extraordinary; as Christ sent the first Apostles, so he sends the ordinary Ministers of the Gospel; *lo I am with you to the end of the world; with you as long as you shall live, and with them that shall succeed you in the ordinary work of the Ministry.* The Apostles were sent with extraordinary Gifts, endued with an infallible Spirit, to write Scriptures, with Gifts of Miracles, Gifts of Tongues; but for the main, the substance of the Commission is the same, *viz.* to testify the Grace of God to every man, and to reveal the Will of God.

*Secondly*, Consider the Message that Ministers bring you. God and man were at variance, the Son of God hath done and suffered all that was necessary on his part to make peace; Ministers are sent in the stead of Christ to persuade men to accept of those terms, upon which peace may be had. Behold we come as *Abraham's* Servant, to propose a Match between the Son of God, and the Sons of men, to espouse you to Christ. God hath sent us to invite you, nay to compell you to come to the Marriage-Feast, and to tell you that all things are ready on God's part. We can shew you, as *Abraham's* Servant did, *Gen. 24. 22.* the Bracelets and the Ear-rings, and the precious things that God hath sent you by us. I don't speak this to gain outward  
Respect



Respect and Precedence before men, but you are to consider, that whatever respect you show Ministers, 'tis infinitely short of what is due to them, till the Message they bring you be entertain'd. To receive us and entertain us as one Friend doth another at your Table, alas what is this? To receive a Prophet in the name of a Prophet is to receive the Message he brings you. We are sent to perswade you to be reconcil'd to God; your kindness to us is not enough, till you are become the Friends of God that sent us. When *Ehud* told *Eglon* that he had a Message from God to him, *he arose out of his seat*, Judg. 3. 20. Our Message is not as his was, but 'tis a Message of Peace and good-will. Surely therefore, whatever the Messenger is, the Message is weighty. And whatever opposition we may meet with from others, that condemn us and our Preaching as schismatical, our Ministry as a Nullity; though they accuse us for counterfeiting the great Seals of Heaven, if we can prevail in our Message, which is to perswade you to be reconcil'd to God, to espouse you to Christ; 'tis this will support us under all the hard Speeches of men otherwise minded. Now it lieth upon you to enable us, to use the words of the Apostle to the *Corinthians*, among whom there were some of their Ministers that did not only despise his Person and Gifts, but did also question his Apostleship, 1 Cor. 9. 2. *If I be not an Apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you; for the Seal of mine Apostleship are ye in the Lord.* See you to it that you disprove them that nullifie our Ministry. Perhaps you are not able to answer all the Objections that may be made against our Ministry, and Preaching: No more was the blind man in the Gospel able to answer all that the *Jews* said against Christ; but he had an inartificial Argument drawn from the good he had receiv'd from him, that put them all to silence. *Whereas I was born blind, now I see.* Saith the Psalmist, *I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickned me.* Whilst others expose our Prayers as nonsensical, or worse, if by this Mode of Praying, in which we lead you to the Throne of Grace, you keep up the Spirit of Devotion; if by our Ministry we perswade you to be reconcil'd to God, and espouse you to Christ; if our Ministry obtain its great end upon you, which is to better Mankind; by this means we shall be encouraged, and you shall be established.

F I N I S.

